

United States Senate  
Committee on Indian Affairs

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“Census 2000, Implementation in Indian Country

Testimony of

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Census Advisory Committee

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Good morning, Chairman Campbell, Vice-chairman Inouye, and members of the committee. The views that I express are my own or of fellow members of the Native American Census Advisory Committee and do not reflect the official policy of the U.S. Census Bureau.

The Native American/Alaskan Native Census Advisory Committee is committed to drastically improve on the Native American undercount of 12.1% experienced in the 1990 Census.

According to the Census Bureau, hard to count populations also tend to be characterized by high unemployment, low education, low income, renters vs. homeowners, difficulty reading or writing English, and overcrowding. These characteristics exemplify the Native American populations.

For Census 2000, the Census Bureau conducted an Address List Review Program. This program gives Tribal governments an opportunity to review the number of addresses in each Census Block. The 1990 census local review program allowed a mere 15 days for local and tribal official to conduct reviews. The current Address List Review Program allows for roughly a three month period to organize address records, review the related census maps, and comment on the counts of addresses for each Census Block. These measures along with regional offices working hand-in-hand with tribal officials should improve the chances of census questionnaires even reaching the hands of Native Americans.

Being a tribal planner for the past 20 years has taught me the importance and value of accurate and timely census data. The problem lies in convincing the average Native American that millions of dollars are at stake as most state and federal dollars are distributed based upon census figures. An overall distrust in government, a fear of confidentiality, and a privacy issue i.e. “the government does not need to know these things” all contribute to the lack of response.

In order to convince the Native population to respond to the census, I believe the best method is hire as many Native Americans at all levels within the Census Bureau to get the word out. I can safely say that currently the Census Bureau has the lowest proportion of Native American employees for their size. Recent field hires in Indian country have occurred for the Community Partner and Indian Outreach Specialists program, however, there is still a dire need to hire personnel on permanent basis for key positions within the agency.

In response to this need and for record I am enclosing a resolution from the Midwest Alliance of

Sovereign Tribes (NO. 99.05). The resolution requests each federal agency that has a direct impact on Indian Tribes initiate the development of hiring policies and procedures that target the hiring of additional Native Americans and further directly involves Indian Tribes in the selection process.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of multiple response as mandated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the “Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity.” (62 FR 58781-57790). Under the new directive, census respondents will be allowed to select one or more of five racial categories. It is the position of the Native American/Alaskan Native Advisory Committee that Native Americans should not be included in this directive. Federal agencies that collect data should recognize the Trust Responsibility and unique relationship with Indian Tribes and should report all data separately. For all practical purposes all census responses that indicate Native American should stand alone for tabulation purposes and not be diluted with other ethnic and racial groups.

I like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to testify and I am prepared to answer any questions you may have.

**MIDWEST ALLIANCE OF SOVEREIGN TRIBES**

MAST Resolution No. 99-05

**Title: Federal Agency Employee Selection Process**

WHEREAS, the Midwest Alliance of sovereign Tribes (MAST) is in intertribal Organization representing the thirty-five (35) federally recognized tribes In the States of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa

WHEREAS, it is the Mission of MAST “to advance, protect, preserve and enhance the Mutual interest, treaty rights, sovereignty and the cultural way of life of The Sovereign Nations of the Midwest throughout the 21st Century” and,

WHEREAS, the thirty-five members of the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes are concerned regarding the lack of involvement of Indian tribes in the hiring process for key positions in all federal agencies, government-to-government relationship with Indian Nations, and

WHEREAS, the personnel employed for these positions should be of Native American descent, and must have an understanding of issues pertinent to the federal agency that have a direct impact on Indian Tribes.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we the Member Tribes of MAST, do hereby request that each federal agency initiate the development of hiring policies and procedures that target the hiring of additional Native Americans and directly involve Indian tribes in the selection for the key position within their agency.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that tribal leaders be consulted in the development of these policies and procedures.

We certify that resolution was duly presented, read, officially acted at the Regular Quarterly meeting, January 27-28, 1999, of the Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes, Lac du Flambeau, Wisconsin, a quorum present.

For: 18 Against: 0 Silent 0